



Characterization of local chicken production and management systems in Tanzania

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Abstract

Most of rural people keep the local chickens basically as source of nutrition and income. However, the chickens are characterized with low productivity and high mortality rate prior maturity, indicating lack of general poultry husbandry knowledge. A study was then conducted to generate baseline information required for designing improved nutritional management for rural chicken production in Babati District of Tanzania. Data were collected in a survey that included both individual interview and a participatory group discussion. A total of 141 households from four different wards were interviewed and four group discussions were held. The questionnaire was designed to collect data covering general information on rural chicken production such as production status, population structure, nutritional and health management. The findings showed that 96.5% of the chickens kept in Babati district are local strains and they are mostly owned by women at an average number of 5 birds per household. Production of meat and eggs for home consumption is the primary function of chickens, followed by selling of both eggs and live birds as a source of income. Most of the village households (53.2%) were keeping their chickens under scavenging feeding system where chickens are left to search for their feeds with rare supplementations of a handful, unbalanced feeds comprised of maize bran, sorghum or sunflower seed cake. The kitchen left-overs were the dominant supplement throughout the year. Other systems were the semi-scavenging (36.9%) and confinement with fully indoor feeding systems (9.9), but these too faced unbalanced feeding challenge. Absence of vaccination programs leads to high risk of exposure of chickens to disease. Ultimately, all the three production systems revealed similar characteristics of high mortality rates (60%) mainly due to malnutrition, diseases, predators, and environmental hazards associated to poor housing. The hens produced an average of 13 eggs per clutch with only 3 clutches per year. The farm gate price of chickens fluctuated over the year mainly due to disease incidences and festival seasons such as Christmas and Easter. The results point to the need for interventions in improved strategies for nutrition and health management of the rural chickens in order to enhance their productivity.

Key words: Rural chickens, management characterization, production performance, feed resources.

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